

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Soul Correction - An Insight

Perhaps this is painfully obvious, but for me, it is coming slowly into focus. Our challenging limitations, circumstances and character traits exist solely to help us shift from putting ourselves in the center to putting Hashem in the center. When we make Hashem the center, everything else becomes peaceful and in place. When we pursue ourselves as the center without Hashem in the picture, whether or not we obtain what we expend energy thinking is good for us, we follow a painful road to superficiality and emptiness.

The challenges and the limitations that Hashem gave me to possess and struggle with in this lifetime trigger instincts to put myself in the center. The danger in acting from such a place is that I leave Hashem out of the picture. When I react or do hishtadlus without having Hashem in the picture as the ultimate cause of the struggle, I need a soul correction, because at all times, in all ways, I have free will for the sole purpose of remembering and declaring that Hashem is in the center. Another way of saying that Hashem is in the center is that Hashem is One. That there is nothing except Hashem. And further, that spiritually, I have no separate existence from Hashem even though I have an individual body and physical presence in a world of time and space.

In the world of time and space, with our limited perceptive abilities and our internalized yetzer hara, we often encounter doubt about what is occurring. At these times, my natural condition (created when Adom sinned with apple and internalized a false idea that we have real choice between doing Hashem's will and something else) considers what is happening to me and how I would like to respond can easily go astray because the pain, like a dark cloud, covers up the very part of me that remembers Hashem. I think I have a choice.

How can we remember that Hashem is One (what we do not remember when we are in a dark cloud obscuring our spiritual vision)? The very fact that we have to deal with doubt and uncertainty reveals that we are not in control on this planet and is a constant gift to remind us that Hashem is One. So what do we do? We are in a dark cloud, in doubt, upset, in pain and more. For myself, I am attempting to fence in this set of feelings and label it lovingly and gently a no-fly zone - do not go there because it is not real. It is merely an illusion of choice.

When we are very little, we are egocentric. As we mature, hopefully we develop a maturity to interact and co-exist and to become compassionate and giving people. Nevertheless, we may easily and often are thrown back into our original condition of egocentricism, with "me" at the center. These conditions and character traits – what are they for?

Experiencing and dealing with our individualized conditions and character traits are soul corrections, and we will continue to experience them until we elect with our free will to put Hashem in the center. What does that mean?

Our individual conditions and character traits are opportunities to shift from the center being "me" to the center being "I have no separate existence from Hashem and therefore I choose to bring out the Divine aspects within my soul and act from there." When we do this, we bring revelation to the world, that there is a Creator that we bring into the world by our free will. And He then has no further need to darken our days with the condition or emotional loss of control that our character trait can lead to. In effect, we achieve the soul correction - the soul correction is the shift itself from "me" to Hashem in the center. Once we operate from a perspective of Hashem in the center, the Divine image within us helps us to correct what we were unable to do without His help. It brings inner peace and shines light into the world.

May this simple but hard to do shift be easier to do as we become more aware of the great peace and pleasure we experience when we so choose. Every moment we have the opportunity to experience this pleasure, merely by bringing Hashem into the picture instead of stewing in ourselves seeking whatever pleasure we anticipate that might bring. After all, as Rabbi Nivin says, if we were dining with the Chofetz Chaim we would not be focused on how our soup tastes!